DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 672 CE 056 445

AUTHOR Bingman, Mary Beth; And Others
TITLE A Teacher in a Different Way: Group Literacy Instruction in Tennessee.
INSTITUTION Tennessee Univ., Knoxville. Center for Literacy Studies.
SPONS AGENCY Knoxville News Sentinel Co., TN.; Tennessee State Dept. of Education, Nashville. Div. of Adult and Community Education.
PUB DATE 90
CONTRACT Z-0-49846
NOTE 25p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee, 102 Claxton Education Bldg., Knoxville, TN 37996-3400 ($2.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; *Group Dynamics; Group Experience; Grouping (Instructional Purposes); *Group Instruction; Illiteracy; *Literacy Education; Workshops

ABSTRACT

In spring 1990, the Center for Literacy Studies convened two 1-day workshops on group literacy instruction, bringing together some 41 literacy coordinators, teachers, volunteers, and students from the eastern part of Tennessee. The workshops were designed to share experiences on the introduction of group methods, to exchange ideas on "what works," to identify continuing needs and problems, and to give new insights. Literacy practitioners enjoyed working in groups. Workers and students alike valued the interaction made possible by group instruction. Adult learners talked about the support and challenges that group members give each other. They identified as problems the effects of people with different educational levels and learning styles working together. Participants also shared specific information on making group literacy programs work: organizing groups, recruiting and retaining students, choosing content and materials, working with students who learn differently, defining and assessing success, and training volunteers and teachers. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED326672

A TEACHER IN A DIFFERENT WAY:

GROUP LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN TENNESSEE

MARY BETH BINGMAN
JULIET MERRIFIELD
CONNIE WHITE
LORETTA WHITE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Merrifield

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CENTER FOR LITERACY STUDIES
102 Claxton Education Building
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-3400
615-974-4109

CE056445

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Preparation of this report was made possible in part through grant number Z-0-49846 from the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Adult and Community Education, and through a grant from the Knoxville News Sentinel Company.

This material is not copyrighted, and may be freely reproduced with the usual crediting of source.

U.T. Publication Authorization number R01-1557-43-001-91

CONTENTS

PREFACE 1

SUMMARY 3

INTRODUCTION 4

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN EAST TENNESSEE 5

THE BEST THINGS ABOUT GROUPS 6

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON GROUPS 7

GROUP LITERACY PROGRAMS - MAKING THEM WORK 9

- Organizing Groups 9
- Recruitment and Retention of Students 11
- Students Who Learn Differently 14
- Assessment and Success 15
- Volunteers 17
- Training 18

CONCLUSIONS 19

The teacher is viewed as part of the family. She is our teacher, but in a different way, a leader through something you want to get out of your life.

PREFACE

The Center for Literacy Studies held two workshops on group literacy instruction in Spring, 1990. The workshops brought together practitioners and students from many east Tennessee literacy programs to share their experiences of group literacy instruction, to exchange ideas, and to identify continuing needs and problems.

The workshops were part of the Center for Literacy Studies' continuing research interest in group methods of instruction. The Center's overall goal is to conduct research that adds to our knowledge about literacy and contributes to effective literacy program development and instruction. Reflection on their practice by teachers and learners contributes to the identification of key issues for research, and gives us insights into the realities of the classroom.

Publication of this report was made possible by a grant from the Knoxville News Sentinel Company. The Center receives additional funding from the State of Tennessee, Department of Education, from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and from grants and contracts for special research projects.

When we get in groups we are all adults. We teach each other.

SUMMARY

The discussions at the workshops indicated that group instruction has been widely introduced in east Tennessee, and is highly valued. Hands-on experience in organizing groups has led practitioners to a number of insights into how to make them work, and into problems which are not yet fully resolved. Key findings are:

1. **Group instruction has been widely introduced.** Almost all counties in east Tennessee have at least one class, and many have several.

2. **Group instructions is valued.** Practitioners enjoy working with groups, value the interaction and support for learning. Students value the challenges of group work, the comfort of the learning process and the building of self-confidence.

3. **Concerns about organizing groups quickly disappear.** Practitioners and students agreed that they had been apprehensive of groups at first, but that the nervousness quickly disappeared.

4. **Meeting the needs of learners at different levels and learning at different rates is a potential problem.** A possible solution was offered in the combination of group work and individual tutoring.

5. **Recruitment for groups is not very different from other recruitment activities,** but some felt that group instruction enables better retention because students feel more successful and at ease.

6. **Programs use a wide range of materials in group work,** including a substantial amount of unpublished teacher-made materials developed from students' own interests and work.

7. **Learning disabilities continue to be a topic of major concern to practitioners.** While groups may compound these problems by making it harder to meet individual needs, some suggested that group instruction may help because it can include a variety of learning styles.

8. **Assessment of academic progress and that of success are different.** It was widely agreed that group instruction tends to create a greater feeling of success among students.

9. **Volunteers continue to be widely used in literacy programs.** Most continue in one-on-one tutoring, but some are helping with groups.

INTRODUCTION

In the last couple of years, Tennessee's state-wide literacy program has made a remarkable transition from one-on-one tutoring to learner-centered group instruction. One-on-one tutoring has historically predominated in both the private volunteer and state literacy programs. As the state program targeted a greatly increased number of adult literacy students, it developed new resources and new programs to meet their needs. The Tennessee Department of Education, with support from private organizations, led the way in introducing student-centered group approaches to literacy education.

Despite the domination of one-on-one tutoring in literacy education, there are historical precedents for group approaches. The Moonlight Schools of Kentucky in the early twentieth century used small group methods to reach adults in rural and mountainous areas of the state. The Citizenship Schools of the Civil Rights Movement taught thousands of blacks across the South to read and write as part of their mobilization and participation in a political system long closed to them. These schools used teaching materials closely connected with adult students' everyday lives and needs, and many of them were taught by teachers without formal classroom training. The major requirement for teachers in the Citizenship Schools was that they be leaders in the community, and concerned about the lives of their students.

These examples suggest some of the rich traditions on which today's learner-centered groups are based. They are distinct both from individual tutoring and from more traditional classrooms. Every group is different, because the mix of teacher and students is different, but they generally have several key characteristics:

** groups are small in size (commonly 5-15 students);
** they are "learner-centered" in that they seek to adapt the curriculum to the needs and interests of participating students;
** they are "experiential" in that they seek to incorporate students' experiences, skills and ideas in the teaching;
** the teacher is commonly seen more as a facilitator of learning and a leader than as a person conveying information;
** they are cooperative, in that students commonly help each other and work together;
** they are participatory, in that students have a say in what is taught and how it is taught, rather than being passive recipients.

As part of an ongoing interest in learner-centered group instruction, the Center for Literacy Studies has both convened workshops and participated in a number of training sessions in Tennessee over the past eighteen months. In the Spring of 1990, the Center for Literacy Studies convened two one-day workshops on group literacy, bringing together some 41 literacy coordinators, teachers, volunteers and students from around the eastern part of the state. The workshops were designed to share experiences on the introduction of group methods, to exchange ideas on "what works", to identify continuing needs and problems and give us new insights.

The workshops were intense and exciting experiences for all of us. Much information was shared, much was learned, and new perspectives were gained. This report summarizes discussions at the two workshops. It is a report on "work in progress" in several senses. It reports on a continuing saga of transition that has come a long way but has not been completed. It is also part of an ongoing research interest that we hope will be continued in other parts of the state in the coming year.

The report reviews the best things about groups from the practitioners' and students' perspectives, and a variety of factors involved in making group literacy programs work: the nitty-gritty of organizing a group, recruiting and retaining students, choosing content and materials, working with students who learn differently, defining and assessing success, and training volunteers and teachers.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN EAST TENNESSEE

We began this research on group literacy classes by sending a survey to ABE 1 coordinators across East Tennessee. We had responses from twenty-three programs. Based on this data, collected early in 1990:[1]

- ** There are at least 66 group literacy classes in East Tennessee.
- ** About 450 students take part in these classes.
- ** All counties are also continuing one-on-one tutoring.
- ** The two counties which have not used group instruction are planning to start.

[1] The programs included in these figures are Anderson, Athens-McMinn, Bledsoe, Blount, Bradley, Campbell, Carter, Cumberland, Grainger, Greeneville City, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson City, Knox, Monroe, Polk, Rhea, Roane, Sevier, Scott, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union.

Group literacy is approached in many ways in East Tennessee. The classes are led by ABE teachers, career ladder teachers, volunteers and county coordinators. The volunteers may be retired teachers, former literacy students, or current students, and work with groups either as group leader or as an aide. Group classes are held in libraries, jails, at the Department of Employment Security, in high schools and elementary schools, in community centers and recreation centers, and in separate adult reading centers. Groups meet in the morning, afternoon, and night. Learners may study math, writing, spelling, and grammar, and life or employability skills, as well as reading. Programs are sometimes set up to serve special groups -- truckers or parents with young children. There is wide variety of programming determined by the needs and resources of the communities.

** One tutor has a group of five men and a woman, using a manual and tapes for a truckers license.
** A VISTA volunteer is coordinating classes in a housing project, going door-to-door recruiting.
** 75-100 people are in classes at the justice center, grouped by reading level.
** A group of twelve meets once a week at a high school, taught by a career ladder teacher who had taught in an alternative school.
** A small group of nonreaders to 4th grade level, is taught by a volunteer retired teacher.
** A group of 4-6 men from the justice center are brought to class by the sheriff.

Most programs use a combination of materials and methods. The ones noted most often were Laubach (12) and Steck-Vaughn (15). At least eight programs used unpublished teacher-made materials for at least part of their instruction.

THE BEST THINGS ABOUT GROUPS
Literacy Practitioners' Perspectives

The workshops enabled us to hear more in-depth comments about how group instruction is working in east Tennessee. Workshop participants made it very clear they enjoyed working in groups. Workers and students alike value the interaction made possible by group instruction. They liked all the ways people in groups can learn from and help each other. Practitioners felt good about using group learning activities to build students' self esteem. Comments from the practitioners in the workshops show both the uniqueness of each county's groups, and also the commonality of positive regard they have for group work:

When we get in groups we are all adults and we teach each other. There is no distinction. We team teach. We have multiple tutors in the group; we alternate nights.

Students have a responsibility for themselves and for the group. We are thinking of pairing old students and new students in the group.

Every class is a new experience. They get caught up in it, answer each other's questions.

Students form a support group. Sometimes in their social circles, it's not appropriate to raise a lot of questions. In class for the first time they have permission to raise questions, to explore.

We were scared to death of groups at first. But after the first class, we saw there was no need to be frightened. Lessons fell in place once we got the group together.

Each group has its own energy and personality.

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON GROUPS

Several students attended both workshops and talked about their experiences in groups. These adult learners talked about the different roles they play in their groups. One was the class clown, making people laugh. Another gave encouragement to others at every opportunity. A third pushed and challenged the others, often getting impatient when the class got too slow. All helped each other.

Some of these adult learners had talked to a sixth grade learning resource class recently. The children in the class were unable to read and some had been told by their own parents that they were dumb. One of the ABE students told them, *It's okay to tell your parents they're wrong if they tell you you're dumb.* The children are still writing to them. One boy who had entirely given up went to his teacher afterward and said that he was going to learn how to read.

The students had many observations on being in a group and why it was a good learning situation for them. They talked about both the support and the challenges which group members can give each other. They also identified some problems, particularly the effects of people with different educational levels and learning styles working together.

I love to be in a group. We help each other, like each other. I love to be around people, don't know what it would be like to be separate. I expected to be with an individual tutor, but I like the group. It helps me to help other people, it makes me feel good about myself. We love each other, help each other to learn. It's something to tell your grandkids. I never finished high school, I have to do it for myself.

I can relate to the group, have fun, learn to read at the same time. I do get impatient because I can work faster than everyone else, I'm a fast learner. I go ahead and do other things while the group reviews.

I have the same problem. I can go back and help others at the lower level. It doesn't bother me not to move faster. I was referred for GED pretest, placed in a group. I'm the oldest one in it. It's a good group, working together. My goals have changed. It has reinforced me, brought me out, given me a push.

I started in a group. I felt like I was holding myself back, so I asked for a tutor. I go four times a week including group and tutor. The group helps build self-confidence, overcome shame. Sometimes I need to excel, work on my own. There's a good atmosphere in my group, no pressure. It works better than what we've been raised up to expect. There are highs and lows, so hang on. There's a wide range of levels.

Others in the group have the same feelings you do. You get rid of all the shame, how you feel inside not knowing how to read. I bulled my way through school, you need the group to pick at you.

The group experience is different from one-on-one tutoring. These students found the group more relaxing and felt less personal pressure.

You get the idea that there's no pressure, then you can relax. In a group, the class works together. One-on-one has more pressure. With a tutor you have to use the skill that you've learned in group. That's motivating.

We're comfortable with each other. We break up in small groups. It's easy to learn in that environment. We're studying space and history right now, and enjoy that. It's all at your own pace.

The students identified the importance of the teacher's and tutor's roles in making the group function successfully:

Being comfortable starts with looking at the teacher, seeing the teacher wanting you to learn.

[The teacher] is viewed as part of the family. She is our teacher but in a different way, a leader through something you want to get out of your life.

[The tutor] carries a lot of corrective encouragement. She says "Stop, you know this. Clear your head and go through it again."

In the second workshop, after hearing the students talking, a participant observed that she had wondered what had been wrong with other training on groups that she had attended. She had missed the student input. The students added a real richness to the workshops, and we all learned a great deal from them.

GROUP LITERACY PROGRAMS - MAKING THEM WORK

In addition to the general discussions about the impacts of group literacy on students, teachers, and programs, we shared specific information on making groups work. This section presents group literacy in operation.

Organizing Groups

Participants talked about how they had got started with groups, and some of the key issues for them in organizing groups and making them work. Most had prior experience with individual tutoring.

I started out one-on-one, but students would never come. I thought that tutoring wasn't for me. But the people at the Literacy Program asked me to help tutor a group, and it's totally different.

The "ideal" size for a group was a topic of hot concern:

How large should a group get before you need to add an assistant or split it into two groups?

If reading levels are about the same, you can have a larger group.

Nine or ten is the ideal group size.

I am going to experiment with a paid teacher working with a larger group, with a couple of [volunteer] assistants to work with. The assistants can work on more specific skills in small groups or one-on-one.

Participants also talked about the kinds of things they can do in groups that work better than in one-on-one situations:

> *Using groups permit us to do activities like critical thinking together.*
>
> *Groups permit the best use of language experience. The first night students can read what they've said. Later they can chop up the sentence and read the same words in other contexts. The fact that it is a person's own language helps them read it.*
>
> *Any time we find anything about learning to learn we use it. I took Learning Differently and discussed it with students. They talked about how they learned. I have also used it in reading classes. We talked about definitions of reading, about comprehension, oral vs. silent reading.*

In many ways, groups make clearer that responsibility for learning belongs to the learner. Group dynamics play themselves out in different ways depending on the mix of personalities in the groups. One teacher and her volunteer assistant talked about their group experiences:

> *I was a public school teacher for all these years, but I never liked having to be an authority. There are moments in the classroom when I say to myself, "Do I have to keep on schedule?"*
>
> *Volunteers have more freedom in the group than the teacher. I feel like you are right to gently get things back on track.*
>
> *It's harder with the morning group. There are strong personalities, and it's harder to know when to bring things back on track. The thing that makes groups strong can also undermine them. Talking can lead into things to work on, but can also go beyond that. Things that need to be done don't get done.*
>
> *One huge difference in working with adults, in the final analysis it is on the shoulders of the learner.*

Workshop participants recognized that working in groups might not be the best teaching methodology in every situation. The problem of making group instruction fit everyone's needs was mentioned often, as was the management of different levels within one group. Some of the concerns expressed were:

** how to integrate a new person into the group;
** how to deal with the differences in rate of learning, with the fact that some students catch on faster than others;

** how to accommodate differing student goals;
** how to decide which students should be in what groups;
** what happens with people who aren't comfortable in groups.

While nobody had all the answers, there were helpful suggestions. A combination of group work and one-on-one tutoring seems to have worked in several programs, either to accelerate a student's program or to provide special support to a student having difficulty. Introducing new students into a group only once a month was another suggestion, to limit the time spent catching up new entrants into the group's activities. While group planning doesn't always mean that everyone's needs are met, it does give everyone input into the group program.

Recruitment and Retention of Students

Recruitment of students is a topic of concern to all the literacy programs. Methods used include direct appeals to potential students through:

** Word of mouth
** An annual recruitment campaign knocking on doors.
** Radio spots.
** Posters (bright yellow instead of white) with simple words and emphasis that the classes are free.
** Offering a variety of classes - pre-GED, Read Better, GED.
** Fliers in paycheck envelopes.
** Putting fliers in the bags at commodity food distribution.
** Sending information home with school children, for example pictures with the program phone number for the children to color. Go into classrooms and talk about the program, stressing it is for nonreaders and people who want to improve their reading;
** Setting up booth at the fair with drawing for prizes.

Students can also be reached through other people. Ways to involve others in recruitment include:

** Through inter-agency meetings, make availability known.
** Speak to civic groups - be available as a fill-in speaker.
** Referrals from Department of Human Services
** To recruit tutors, put fliers in bank statements.

After students are recruited, the issue becomes retention. Literacy students' life situations often make class attendance difficult, and the drop-out rate can be high. Participants talked about their responses:

We use constant phone calling. If a student misses more than one class, call.

Call or go to the front door. And be honest with them about their reasons for missing.

Put the responsibility on the students. At the first meeting we said, "You've got to work because if it falls through, we can't do it next year."

Develop a sense of responsibility to the group.

Make sure students know they are welcome to come back. Welcome them back and remind them of their goals.

If they have a problem it is important that they feel comfortable with you to help work it out.

No guilt in the classroom. We're all equal. Talk about how important they all are. "You are an adult, you decide what you want to learn."

Whoever makes initial contact with the students needs to be positive about groups.

Have lots of participation, playtime, covered dish dinners, contests, and games.

- Student Orientation

The Knox County program has begun a student orientation program which they believe has made a significant difference in retention. The orientation sessions are held once a month, and all students must attend. Twenty to fifty students attend each month. The staff and students from Knox County talked about the orientation to the Workshops.

Retention is helped by orientation. Students walk in as total strangers. We don't make a differentiation among teachers, students and spouses. We all leave as friends, talking to each other.

Students talk about what specifically they want to read, what obstacles might be in their way. The best thing is having current students talk about their experiences. People talk about what they went through in school, how they feel. They see they're not alone.

Some questions seem stupid, but when you get into it, you see the importance. It gets you prepared.

You hear things like: "Get there on time; Devote yourself; Feel free to talk to the teacher about what you want; Hang on when you reach a dry spell; Things happen in life you can't help".

We started off thinking that orientation would help people be prepared for the amount of work it would take. It turned out that knowing that they were not the only one in the world who is in this situation helped most. The orientation is to students what meetings like this are to us: a pepper-upper.

Materials

Most programs use a variety of materials in their groups. Nearly all use unpublished materials, developed from learners' interests. A few programs use only materials developed by the group. However most also use published materials, at least to teach "basic skills." Among the published materials mentioned as especially valuable are:

** Read On published by Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) used for group reading and work on word families; includes good writing exercises and can be used with mixed level groups;
** the Challenger series from New Readers Press for learners beyond the beginning level;
** the Steck-Vaughn comprehension series for supplemental work;
** Reading Power by Harcourt Brace for life-coping skills;
** Basic Composition by New Readers Press;
** Learning Differently from the Center for Literacy Studies to talk about how people learn and definitions of reading.

Not all practitioners felt published materials were key to their teaching:

We didn't have any materials, and came to rely on essay writing, on using the writing students do.

Sometimes materials get in the way.

Non-readers need to come away from the first session knowing they can do it. You need a small group or volunteer help. I believe in writing a lot. If someone can write three words and their name, I say

we're going to write: you talk and I'll write. Tell me some things you love to do, some things you are really good at.

Some Tennessee literacy teachers have attended workshops on the Bronx Education Services (BES) method. Only a few programs are using the method now, but those who do are enthusiastic.

I tried all the methods. I made more progress in three months with BES than in the whole year before.

Most programs chose either a phonetic or life issue approach. The beauty of BES is it contains both. It has a strong phonetic system, but moves twice as fast as with Laubach. You start with larger components immediately and learn to combine sounds fast. It gives people a system for decoding.

The BES system is designed to be used with groups and enables learners to work with each other to develop and practice decoding skills. Because it was developed in an urban area, it has to be adapted somewhat to use here, and some programs don't use it all. But the model is a flexible one and one that can be used to supplement other work.

Students Who Learn Differently

Adults learn in many different ways. Approaches to learning, anxieties about learning, past experiences, learning "styles" are different for each person. Some people adapt relatively easily to various methods of instruction and different learning environments; they are quite flexible. Other people are more limited in the environment they feel comfortable in and the learning approaches that work for them. Some may learn differently enough to have been called learning disabled in some way.

Learning differences occur both in students and teachers and affect the learning/teaching process. When instruction is a group process, the differences may be compounded by the difficulties of giving individual attention. Paying attention to how people learn is important. Some felt that groups have an advantage in this:

Everyone doesn't learn the same way. The beauty of groups is you get all kinds of approaches. Having two people team-teach with different styles can be good.

Participants in the workshops had questions and concerns about learner differences and how to deal with them.

> *We don't talk about our "failures" and we need to. For students who just can't seem to make progress with academic skills, we do life coping skills.*
>
> *There are some in our program who still can't read after three years.*
>
> *We're not specialists. I feel comfortable about remediation but not diagnosis.*

These comments express the frustration that comes when people seem not to learn. There are no easy answers, but participants had helpful suggestions:

> *1) Talk to the students about their problems and 2) keep trying different approaches until the teacher and learner find what works.*
>
> *If you suspect a student has a learning disability and talk to them about it, they are so relieved.*
>
> *The students know that the regular system didn't work for them or they wouldn't be in the class now.*
>
> *Talking about learning problems can be done in a non-threatening way. You can discuss different learning styles. The class can talk about the different reasons people sometimes don't do well in school.*
>
> *We should use every learning style we can in class.*
>
> *Try a lot of different styles until you find something that works.*

Assessment and Success

Assessment of student progress concerns many coordinators and teachers. There is some need to assess individual students, both for diagnosis and evaluation. The teacher needs to have an idea of what the student can already do. Both teacher and student want to keep track of progress. The state needs assessment for program evaluation, and standardized measurements are often mandated by Federal guidelines. Yet programs do not want to over-test or intimidate students. The workshops examined various alternatives.

The ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Examination) is used in most areas. Several problems with use of the ABLE were noted. The test does not always reflect what the tutors believe the students have learned. On the ABLE Level 2 tests, some coordinators felt that students commonly get high scores indicating that they are ready for a GED program, when their tutors feel they are not. The Select-ABLE intimidates some students and the format is not helpful in determining the student's reading skills.

The ABLE Level 1 was found by some to be good for diagnosis, better than the Slosson. The test can be used to tell students their strong and weak areas instead of their grade level.

Several alternative methods of assessment were suggested including:

** sustained silent reading -- student keeps track of progress on rate of speed;
** cloze methods (leaving out words in a passage to determine a reader's comprehension);
** a portfolio of writing so the student sees progress;
** having students develop checklists or charts or graphs of their successful uses of literacy skills;
** combining a phonics check, the Laubach math placement tests, and ABLE for reading comprehension.

We began to explore how we define "success" in literacy programs. Students, practitioners, and administrators are recognizing the incompleteness of defining success in a narrow academic way when the goals of literacy programs include helping citizens prepare to solve problems and make decisions in a print-based society. In addition to academic success workshop participants identified:

** success in life skills (writing checks, reading notes);
** success in church (being able to read a Sunday School lesson);
** maintaining basic skills when you are developmentally disabled;
** changed self-concept.

These kinds of success are not always obvious when test scores are reported, as one participant noted:

> *There are two kinds of progress -- academic and self esteem, when students help others.*

Groups have good spin-offs with retention, feeling of success. Group dynamics are part of it because they are encouraging to each other. No one is ridiculed.

Volunteers

Almost every program uses volunteers. Most volunteers are probably tutoring in a one-on-one situation, but several are working with groups, and doing very well. They may offer individual help to students in the group, serve as an aide to the lead teacher, or lead the group themselves. Volunteers at the workshop talked about their experiences and ideas:

A certificate doesn't mean you can teach well.

[The VISTA] recruited me to be a tutor. I had no idea of being a teacher. I was more scared than the students. The fact that I'm not a tutor [professional] benefits me. If I don't know, then we have to look it up together; it makes them feel better. They love it when we make mistakes.

I came from a non-teaching background. My husband and I do it together. They pushed us into taking a group. We had had an individual. He was scared of coming to the group, but now he is picking up skills he wouldn't have when he was one-on-one. He had too much attention, he was not drawing on himself. Now the group puts pressure on him.

I stay [as a tutor] because of the coordinator. She takes you out to lunch. She stays in close contact. I know I achieve success by working with this person. The contact person for the tutors is crucial for developing a sense of loyalty and commitment.

The coordinators discussed ways to identify and train volunteers to work with groups, as well as their concerns about using volunteers:

What do you look for in a tutor? Someone flexible, willing to try something new; someone sensitive, not threatened by other adults, willing to let other adults say what needs to be done. It is important to be able to ask learners what works, what they like and don't like.

How do you identify someone who can work with groups? Someone easy-going, comfortable with different people, a natural group leader.

The volunteers are real excited at first, but then they find out it's hard work.

I've noticed that the ones I have a lot of contact with stay. The others don't.

Provide recognition for the tutors. We do things like have coffee and doughnuts, name a volunteer of the month, take them out to dinner.

Training

Training for one-on-one tutoring has been well developed in most programs. But introduction of group literacy has brought the need for new kinds of training for everyone involved. Because group literacy means something different from teaching a traditional teacher-centered class, training is needed for professionals as well as volunteers. The Division of Adult and Community Education and the Tennessee Literacy Coalition have provided special training in group literacy, including workshops led by Mallory Clark, Becky Allen and Guida Muir from the Goodwill Literacy Program in Seattle, and training from Patsy Medina in the Bronx Educational Services (BES) method. Many coordinators have also attended summer institutes. But there are still many questions about how to provide training on the local level, and the need to continue to share experiences among programs.

Coordinators expressed frustration that volunteer tutors don't have time for more than initial training. Special workshops haven't had good response. At the same time volunteers new to group work need special support.

One problem we have is how to get more training for the experienced tutors. They just don't have time to put in extra hours over the amount they already give. We were disappointed when only six people came to our workshop for tutors.

Approaches to training suggested by participants include:

** modeling participatory group facilitation in training sessions -- teaching as you want to tutors to teach;
** training through experience.
** observation and exchange visits, a teacher-to-teacher video exchange;

I learned through experience in groups. I have to do it myself. It's a respect for the students and joy in what you're doing;

Practitioners had insights into the kind of teacher they want to see emerge from the training, and what the training should cover:

One teacher says at the beginning of each group "I'm not only here to teach you, I'm here to learn too."

What are the skills a good teacher needs? Overlearning and review. You have to decide how much to do, what is needed. An ability to pick up on people's needs, how you can help them.

Use Learning Differently in training sessions. Tutors get discouraged when their students don't make progress as fast as expected. You have to prepare both students and tutors to be realistic.

Sometimes a new tutor can't digest a lot of new information at one time; they need continuing training.

Tutors need to know about the turnover rate, not to feel that they have failed.

It is important to show tutors that they can make learning materials out of what the students want. I try not to use any published materials except for backup.

We do a role play in training, act out the student and tutor roles.

How can we train someone scared of groups to do it? You need a support person to help them start up. You model the style of teaching you are talking about in the training itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The staff of the Center for Literacy Studies came away from these workshops impressed by the literacy providers' enthusiasm and by their commitment to learners. People are concerned both about individual students and about having the best possible programs. We were struck at the change in attitude regarding group instruction. In earlier workshops and training sessions some people were uncertain and hesitant about introducing the group model. Many doubted that it would work. By spring

of 1990, while everything has certainly not been smooth, group instruction is an accepted and valued part of literacy programs in East Tennessee.

Teachers and coordinators highlighted additional training and resource needs they still have, including:

** Workshops on workplace and family literacy;
** More training on the Bronx Educational Services model;
** Videotape exchanges, with teachers from different areas discussing how they plan classes, use materials and evaluate their students;
** Visual materials to use for group discussion;
** A directory of programs and staff with locations of groups;
** More literature and research on learning disabilities and remediation;
** Annotated bibliography of resources available at UTK.

The responses to these workshops indicate that this type of gathering fills a real need for direct sharing of experiences between and among practitioners and students. This is over and above the need for specific skills training. The opportunity to learn from others' experiences, to share ideas and problems, and to gain new perspectives is important to the development of better practice. On forms evaluating the workshops many people reported that they valued the open interchange and sharing of ideas, the flexibility of the format, the participation of students, and the equality of participation found in the workshop model. These are the some of the same things valued about group instruction.

> *The group itself was confident, willing to share, experienced and from a variety of backgrounds, so it was really appropriate and so stimulating to have a process that allowed a lot of interaction.*

This statement from a workshop participant was similar to the students' comments on their literacy groups. This kind of response, and the frequent mention of modeling and exchange as valuable training methods, seem to indicate that preparation and training need to based on the same ideas we hope are used in literacy groups -- valuing experience, encouraging participation, and drawing from the group's knowledge.